

Rotary Agricultural Mower Safety¹

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An accident with a rotary mower can cost you your life! A rotary agricultural mower can also injure innocent bystanders, so it is also important that they be alert and aware of safety rules. Using proper equipment correctly, keeping equipment in good repair and following safety practices are the best ways to prevent accidents.

SAFETY PRACTICES FOR ROTARY MOWERS

- Use the right type of mower for the job — Know the job you are going to do, and use the correct mower for it. Check your operator's manual for the type of job your mower is designed to do. For example, don't try to cut brush with a mower designed only for forage. You could be exposed to hazards caused by machine failure. Use heavy-duty blades where they are needed, and use a large enough machine to do the job properly.
- Keep others away — Don't allow riders on your tractor, and keep people away from the work area. Bystanders can be seriously injured or killed if struck by a thrown object or run over by the tractor or mower.
- Watch for objects that can be thrown by the mower and remove them from the area — Tin cans, stones, wire or other objects may be hurled by the mower blades, causing serious injury or death.
- Be alert to obstacles — Obstacles such as ditches, holes, rocks and stumps can throw you off the tractor or cause the tractor to upset. Be especially alert when objects can be hidden by tall grass, weeds or brush. Use the seat belt if your tractor is equipped with roll-over protection.
- Before dismounting for any reason — Disengage the power take-off (PTO), turn off the engine and set the brakes.
- Be sure the blades are stopped before approaching the mower — Many rotary mowers have blades that continue to rotate for some time after the PTO is disengaged.
- Be careful turning sharp corners — On pull-type mowers, the rear tractor wheel could catch the mower frame and throw it on you. With three-point-hitch-mounted mowers, the mower could swing outward when you make a turn. Front wheel weights may be needed to help you keep control.
- Set your rear tires as wide as possible — Wide-set tires provide greater tractor stability and lessen the chance of a tractor overturn (Fig. 1).

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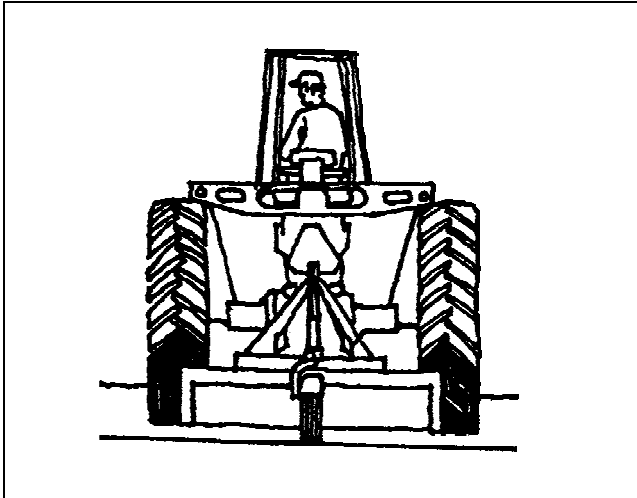


Figure 1. Keep wheels wide for tractor stability.

MAINTENANCE FOR SAFETY

Before operating your mower, study your operator's manual carefully to familiarize yourself with its maintenance procedures.

Begin your pre-operational check by making sure the power take-off is disengaged and the engine is shut off. Look for loose nuts and bolts.

Blade sharpness is a key to efficient, safe mowing. Inspect the blades often, and replace them when they become too dull for additional sharpening.

Remember that hazards increase when you are having problems with the equipment.

Rotary mowers are equipped with runners and safety guards. To avoid excessive wear on the runners, keep the mower just high enough so that it does not ride on the runner shoes.

Guards

Chain or belt guards (Fig. 2) reduce the possibility of objects being thrown from under the mower. Be sure these guards are maintained and kept in place.

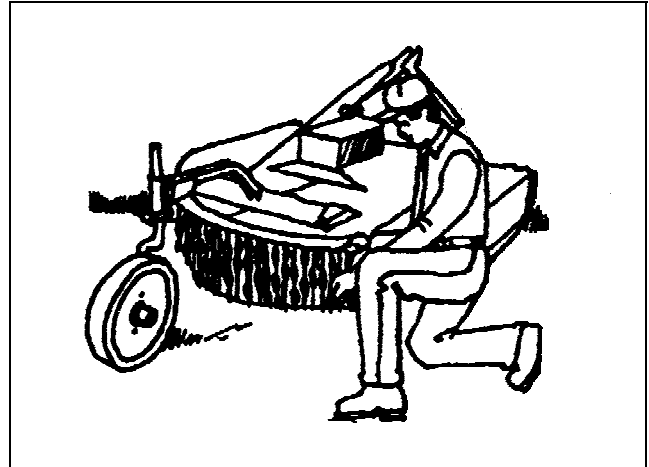


Figure 2. Use chain guards to protect yourself and bystanders.

Power take-off shafts should also be protected by shields or guards. Keep them in place on the machine.

If You Are Under 16

A federal child-labor law affects you. Unless you are working for your parent or guardian on a farm owned or operated by that person, you are not permitted to operate a tractor over 20 PTO horsepower and certain other farm machines, although some of these jobs can be started at age 14 if you have special training. Young people under 14 may be employed to do any job that is not particularly hazardous if they have the written consent of their parent or guardian. There is one exception: children under 12 are not permitted to work on farms that used 500 or more man-days of labor during any quarter of the preceding calendar year. Check with your county Extension office for further details.